

MR. BELCOURT: Name's Tony Belcourt with the Chippewa-Cree Tribe, and newly elected chairman of the IAC. You know, I guess over the years we sit here and look at -- yesterday we attended a session for the Keepseagle versus USDA case, and you look at everybody -- you look at that whole session, and it's discrimination, you know, and it's happening then and it happening right now to this day. 23 And you know we spend millions and millions of dollars fighting that case, and let's turn it around and we're drafting a new Farm Bill. Let's invite tribes to the table so we can sit down before those programs get to the reservations and they become a reg. You know, over and over it's too hard to change the Farm Bill once it gets down to the ground. But if we're at the table, tribes or tribal organization are at the table when we're drafting this legislation, it would be a lot easier. Our tribe had a disaster in 2005.

We farm approximately 10,000 acres of -- a thousand of it is irrigated. Our irrigated acreage got hauled out. So our tribe applied for emergency loan. We couldn't -- we ain't even eligible to apply for disaster assistance based on the eligibility requirements. I mean that's a half a million dollars that we take out of our farm and ranch that goes directly into social service programs to help the short falls from Congress on other social programs. So here we go again. We're at a disadvantage right off the bat. Another program problem where I see happening is irrigation history. They just now got the irrigation history changed to where tribes can participate in EQIP programs. And now we're down to the 50 percent cost share where you're going to see tribes can't even participate, you know, when it was 75 percent. Now it's down to 50 percent.

It's taking another adverse effect on irrigation. So that's another one that need to increase the funding for irrigation. One of the other ones I'd like to see, I think we need to develop a government-to-government consultation policy within all USDA programs. I think there is a lot of he said-she said, when actually let's put it down in writing and what it means to consult. There's publication, radio or whatever. Let's -- to me consultation is sitting down across the table from the tribes and talking one on one. I appreciate your folks having this Farm Bill listening session. I guess I wish it would have been in Indian Country other than Las Vegas, but any time we get our voice heard, it's nice. And we got a lot of work to do, but I think with help we can get it done. Thank you.

MR. RACINE: Thank you, Tony. Now, that's not everything that we talked about yesterday on that short list, right?

MR. BELCOURT: I have a lot of pages.

MR. RACINE: Oh, several pages. Okay.